

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation Codifying State Certification Program for LGBTQ+-Owned Businesses

05/1/2024

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed bipartisan legislation codifying the program he established through [Executive Order No. 295](#) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/vts4tl/nrddit/rqzo28\\_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!Nx5Hd\\_5ksZkYK1Sr78vZ\\_H86fJg4-WSVlUuqpeJM8VwBC6mRLp2unqtM7m6-UgYD9wnOUE-7U1zefmLRUeiCxm6fVDSH\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/vts4tl/nrddit/rqzo28_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!Nx5Hd_5ksZkYK1Sr78vZ_H86fJg4-WSVlUuqpeJM8VwBC6mRLp2unqtM7m6-UgYD9wnOUE-7U1zefmLRUeiCxm6fVDSH$)). (2022) that directed the New Jersey Department of the Treasury to establish a certification for LGBTQ+-Owned Businesses. Business certifications support underrepresented groups in gaining access to certain contracting opportunities and government programs.

Signed by the Governor in May of 2022 alongside the Pride Chamber of Commerce, Executive Order No. 295 underscored that LGBTQ+ businesses are a crucial part of the state's economic health and growth and are encouraged to conduct business in New Jersey. Through today's legislation, the program will continue beyond the Murphy Administration, benefitting generations to come.

"New Jersey is proud to celebrate our LGBTQ+ community year-round, but it is particularly special to sign this law into effect just a few weeks ahead of PRIDE month," **said Governor Murphy**. "LGBTQ+ business owners are critical to the Garden State and our economy, and I am honored to support endeavors that uplift underrepresented communities and embrace authenticity. By codifying this certification program in statute, we ensure that the opportunity to proudly identify as an LGBTQ+-owned business will last for many years to come."

Certification, which is free of charge, expands access to contracting opportunities and enables businesses to proudly identify as LGBTQ+-owned in their advertising. The LGBTQ+-owned business certifications are overseen by the New Jersey Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services. Eligibility for certification requires that the business be at least 51% LGBTQ+ owned and controlled. Certification is valid for five years, at which point the business must reapply for certification ahead of the expiration date.

As of today, the Department of the Treasury has certified 141 LGBTQ+ businesses across New Jersey.

"Dozens of businesses have become certified as an LGBTQ+-owned enterprise since the launch of the program one year ago," **said State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio**. "Treasury is proud to play a role in elevating LGBTQ+-owned businesses, as well as small, minority, women, and veteran-owned enterprises that help make up the backbone of our economy. I'd like to thank the dedicated staff of our Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services for their hard work behind the scenes to launch this program and help New Jersey businesses grow and thrive."

Certification programs are also in place for small, minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and disabled-veteran-owned businesses. Enshrining this program aligns with Governor Murphy's longstanding efforts to boost local economies, promote equal opportunity, and provide supports and protections to New Jersey's vast LGBTQ+ community.

Primary sponsors of S1313/A3330 include Senators Nellie Pou and Teresa M. Ruiz and Assemblymembers Benjie E. Wimberly, Sterley S. Stanley, and Donald A. Guardian.

"The codification of Executive Order 295 is not just a legal step, but a societal victory for LGBTQ+ businesses, granting them recognition they've long deserved. This certification parallels the support extended to minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned enterprises, offering equal footing for growth and access to vital resources," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "New Jersey is leading the way as the first state in the nation to codify this certification, and I am proud to have been a co-sponsor on this important bill. I thank Governor Murphy for signing it into law and continuing to create new economic opportunities for our diverse and innovative businesses."

"Businesses owned in whole or in part by LGBTQ+ individuals touch all aspects of the economy and add to the commercial

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diversity that is a rich part of our shared social identity,” **said Senator Nellie Pou, Chair of the Senate Commerce Committee.** “This new law reaffirms the vital and emerging role those businesses play, and will continue to play in the civic and economic future of our state.”

“LGBTQIA+ individuals are a vital part of New Jersey’s economic, social, and civic landscape and by enshrining the prior executive order into law, we reaffirm our commitment and dedication to fostering a diverse business sector across the Garden State,” **said Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly.** “With this legislation, we remind businesses and by extension, their owners, that they are not only welcomed but encouraged to be a part of our communities.”

“In New Jersey, economic empowerment knows no bounds, and diversity in business is not only essential but enriching,” **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley.** “By providing certification for LGBTQ+ businesses, A3330 not only acknowledges their contributions but does so in a way that fosters a more inclusive economy, where every entrepreneur has an equal opportunity to thrive.”

“Being a member of the LGBTQ community has not always been celebrated or recognized and I lived this experience personally. When New Jersey has an opportunity to right the wrongs of our past we must take it,” **said Assemblyman Don Guardian.** “This law cements the state’s certification program for LGBTQIA-owned businesses, providing legitimacy and visibility. Only a state law can bring the members of the LGBTQ community the peace of mind and security that they so deserve and have earned.”

“This law will ensure opportunities for LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs to connect with customers and one another,” **said Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul.** “LGBTQ+ business owners contribute over \$1 trillion to the U.S. economy but still face obstacles for growth. This certification will promote economic growth with inclusivity, equity, and equality.”

“Today is a historic day for our LGBTQ+ community who will be recognized in New Jersey,” **said Gus Penaranda, Executive Director of the NJ Pride Chamber of Commerce.** “As the first state to codify the certification process for LGBTQ+ certifications. In times where our community is constantly silenced and attacked, this sends a clear message to all businesses looking to invest in New Jersey that we are a welcoming state. This wouldn’t have been possible with the leadership of Senators Pou and Ruiz, and Assemblymembers Wimberly, Stanley, Guardian, and Peterpaul for their leadership. Thank you as well to Governor Murphy, Treasurer Muoio, and their teams for working collaboratively with us to ensure this became law and to further protect LGBTQIA+ business owners. We thank him for signing Executive Order 295 back in 2022, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable business environment that acknowledges and values the contributions of the LGBTQIA+ community.”

## Governor Phil Murphy

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